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March 17, 1999

The Honorable William Kennard
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12 St. SW
Washington DC 20554

RE: Low Power FM Stations

Dear Chairman Kennard:

I'm writing on behalf of the Louisiana Music Commission and the Louisiana music industry in support of the Federal Communications Commission's proposal to ease licensing for low power radio stations.

As a jazz musician, I know all too well how difficult it is to get my music onto ever-tighter radio playlists. As the industry has consolidated into fewer and fewer hands, access to radio for new and independent artists has become more restricted. Low power FM stations could thus be a valuable resource to help all musicians reach wider audiences and therefore be more likely to earn a living and pay taxes.

The many musical genres emanating from Louisiana defy commercial radio categorization. Cajun, zydeco, swamp pop, jazz, blues, Gospel, country, rock, hip hop and more all spring forth from the fertile musical landscape of this state. Music has a more than \$2.4 billion economic impact on Louisiana and our artists sold more than \$500 million in records world wide in the past year. Despite the scale of this industry, many of our artists barely survive because they cannot garner radio airplay in major markets and thus be able to earn a living by performing. An expansion of low power FM stations could greatly impact these musicians by giving them airplay in more markets which could then create a demand for their appearances.

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Radio airplay has a profound effect on the Louisiana music industry. When Louisiana radio stations expand airplay of Louisiana music, our artists see a dramatic increase in their income due to increased public demand for their records and performances. That's why the Louisiana Music Commission works to encourage Louisiana radio to support Louisiana music. However, many of the stations we contact depend upon national radio consultants who neither understand nor desire to expose Louisiana music to their clients. Low power FM stations will change the rules of the game for Louisiana artists and create new opportunities for our musicians and record labels.

As Chairman of the LMC, my biggest concern is the economic viability of the Louisiana music industry. If musicians can't make a living, we will have no music industry. And if musicians are making a living, everyone else in the industry, from radio personnel to events planners to music venue owners, music stores, record stores, agents, managers and road support personnel will be making a living--and paying taxes!

I understand that existing broadcasters are opposed to this proposal. However, I would remind them and all in opposition that competition is the bedrock of our economy. Competition fuels the American Dream. Granting more of the American public access to their own airwaves is a grand, noble act that will empower and enhance our Constitution, our Free Enterprise system and our way of life.

I also understand that there are technical concerns about increasing the number of stations. This is the most solvable aspect of the opposition's platform, and I look to the FCC to help coordinate and designate FM frequencies that will in no way impinge upon existing operations. I seriously doubt that many of the rural locations in this country are flooded with station signals that would prevent the startup of low power broadcasters.

Therefore, please let it be known by all concerned that the Louisiana music industry and the Louisiana Music Commission supports the expansion of licensing of low power FM stations and that we urge the FCC to develop fair standards that not only allow schools, organizations and individuals to launch such stations, but also protects existing stations and prevents large scale operations from buying all the available bands.

I thank you for your efforts on this initiative.

Sincerely,



Ellis L. Marsalis Jr.
Chairman
Louisiana Music Commission